# PetSmart Response September 2018

At PetSmart, nothing is more important than the safety of the pets in our care. That is why we have set the highest grooming safety standards in the industry, and our stylists complete 800 or more hours of hands-on instruction and safety certification, working with at least 200 dogs of all breeds and sizes. In addition, stylists complete annual safety re-certification and participate in quarterly grooming safety training sessions. In 2015, PetSmart played an active role in shaping and advocating for the adoption of care standards for all pet groomers in the industry. More information about this effort, as well as the proposed standards, can be found here.

While it's clear we have set the highest safety standards in the industry, we are always looking to improve. We recognize the responsibility we have every time a pet parent chooses PetSmart, and we want to live up to our promise of being their trusted partner every day. That's why we implemented a comprehensive action plan in February 2018 to provide pets with an even safer and more enjoyable experience in our grooming salons. The actions taken are outlined below:

#### Review Board to review training curriculum

We assembled a team of recognized independent industry experts, accomplished master groomers, accredited veterinarians and pet behaviorists to undertake a detailed review of PetSmart's training and grooming safety standards. This team will provide an unbiased report of its findings and recommendations on any potential areas for improvement.

## • Salon Open Houses

On September 23, PetSmart will host Open Houses in all grooming salons for pet parents to meet their local groomers, discuss their pet's specific needs, tour their local salon and have all their questions answered. These Open Houses will include informative sessions with an overview of safety and training standards, grooming tips and procedures and – importantly – a review of PetSmart's recently enhanced assessments of pets brought in for grooming, designed to ensure a safer grooming experience.

### Enhanced salon monitoring

PetSmart is installing cameras in all grooming salons to provide reassurance to pet parents that their pets will receive the best possible care from the highly skilled grooming staff. Video will be used to assist in ongoing associate education, provide additional oversight and ensure that the quality of service meets PetSmart's strict standards.

### Higher safety standards

The actions above augment new, higher safety standards PetSmart implemented on February 2, 2018. The company now solely offers specialized care for English Bulldogs, French Bulldogs, Pugs, Boxers and Boston Terriers (and any dog mixed with one of these breeds). These specific breeds are more likely to experience respiratory challenges, particularly in stressful environments, and for some dogs, this includes places like a grooming salon. PetSmart's higher safety standards for these breeds include an uninterrupted "Express" service provided by a dedicated grooming professional, limiting the amount of time a pet spends in the salon. When the groom is complete, the pet is returned to the pet parent immediately, so pet parents are now asked to stay in or near the store during their pet's appointment.

Additionally, all PetSmart groomers perform a broader safety assessment of every pet at check-in. They closely observe pets for any combination of the following: lethargy, excessive panting, excessive drooling, trembling or shaking, redness in eyes, and resistance to entering the salon or kennel area. If a pet exhibits any two of these behaviors, PetSmart will not perform the service at that time. Pet parents are welcome to stay in the store with their pet to see if the behaviors pass within 15 minutes. If not, groomers will work with the pet parent to reschedule the appointment or recommend a veterinarian who can perform the service.

A summary of these higher safety standards, an overview of PetSmart's Grooming Academy, tips for pet parents to consider before having their pet groomed, a video tour of a grooming salon, and a behind-the-scenes video of its grooming curriculum are available on PetSmart's website.

We extensively investigate any and every incident, no matter how minor. Our independent team of investigators, many of whom have law enforcement backgrounds, is committed to conducting these comprehensive investigations. The team works closely with our associates, team of experts and pet parents in an effort to fully understand what happened. All incidents must be reported within 24 hours, and even a single failure to report an incident is cause for termination. We have tremendous trust in our team of investigators and this reporting system.

Additionally, we encourage associates to come forward with any concerns they may have. All associates can report issues confidentially and anonymously to our 24-Hour CareSmart Hotline, which is operated by a third-party provider. Our Open Door policy ensures that associates can report concerns without fear of possible repercussions. All reported concerns are immediately investigated.

We reviewed the list of pet names that NJ Advance Media provided, and any assertion that there is a systemic problem is false and fabricated. Specifically:

- There is no record of any pet incidents or customer complaints for eight of the pets mentioned.
- PetSmart has no record of a groom having ever occurred for six of the names provided.
- Based on their parents' wishes, an additional 14 pets referenced never had necropsies performed to determine the true causes of their deaths. More than half of these dogs were advanced in age, overweight, and/or are suspected to have suffered from preexisting medical conditions. In one of these cases, a veterinarian instructed the pet parent not to groom his pet on the same day that the pet was vaccinated. Against this important medical advice, the pet parent scheduled a grooming appointment and concealed the fact that the pet had been vaccinated earlier in the day. If the pet parent had disclosed the recent vaccinations, PetSmart never would have agreed to groom the dog.
- Three pet parents had necropsies performed but refused to share the results of the examinations with PetSmart. Our records confirm that two of these three dogs suffered from pre-existing medical conditions, including obesity. The parent of the third pet in this category chose to create an inflammatory Facebook group and spread misinformation to news outlets. Although we and others—have repeatedly asked her to disclose the results of the necropsy, she has flatly refused. Without being able to review the results of the necropsy, it is impossible to determine the true cause of the dog's death.
- Necropsies were performed on four additional pets, and three indicated the deaths were caused by heart disease. A fourth necropsy was performed and provided a cause of death, however no direct connection between that cause of death and PetSmart's actions was identified.

- Four pet parents had necropsies performed on their pets that were inconclusive. Importantly, suspected pre-existing conditions were noted in each of these cases.
- One pet appeared to be in good health when leaving the groom and an incident was never reported by the pet parent. PetSmart has repeatedly attempted to make contact with the pet parent, to no avail.
- Finally, one of the pets referenced relates to a senior dog. This dog had difficulty breathing long before she was groomed at PetSmart, as confirmed by the pet parent. This pet parent failed to disclose this important fact to our associates during check-in.